

The perpetuation of the Disabled Veterans Tax is just one example of how we have let our veterans down. It is unconscionable that those who have fought for this country are relegated to second class status. The fact of the matter remains that when America makes a promise to those who wear the uniform, that promise should be kept. Military retirement pay is just compensation for a career of honorable service. By contrast, compensation for service-connected disability is designed to assuage the veterans' suffering, pain, and lost future earning power.

I am confident that this bill will get overwhelming support from the Members of this House, because it gives veterans some relief; however, it is not the best that we can do. I will support this bill, because it is right that we provide for the men and women who so valiantly fought for us.

That said, I cannot help but ask why those who so often wrap themselves in the American flag and the language and symbolism of patriotism for political gain refuse to be real patriots and stand up to the President's threat to veto a repeal of the Disabled Veterans Tax.

Why is it that we can spend our country deep into debt by giving tax cuts to the richest one-percent and building infrastructure in foreign lands—while at the same time creating new veterans—but we still can't find sufficient money for education, veterans' health care and an elimination of the Disabled Veterans Tax? There is too much left undone. Sadly, despite its noble goals, this bill leaves many promises unmet and that is just plain wrong. It is time to fulfill our commitment to the Nation's veterans. We can do better than this, and I hope that in the future we will do better than this.

How can America hope to retain its military might if we continually refuse to fulfill our promises to the servicemen and women who came before; the men and women who bravely served our country in its darkest hours, our Nation's veterans? Who will carry the banner of the American ideals and protect this great land, if this government lets fighting men and women fall by the wayside?

Those who fought in two World Wars, in Korea, in Vietnam, in Iraq and every conflict before and in between kept their promise to this great Nation. They served us in the name of freedom, and they served us well. The next time the opportunity to do right by our veterans presents itself, I hope that the Administration and my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will not diminish the greatness of these United States but rather will ensure that their deeds match their rhetoric in helping us keep America's promise to its veterans.

HONORING SSM HEALTH CARE IN WISCONSIN

HON. TAMMY BALDWIN

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 15, 2003

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor one of the nation's leading providers of health care. The role of SSM Health Care in Wisconsin and throughout the country is deserving of a prestigious award.

SSM Health Care is being honored as one of the esteemed recipients of the 2002

Malcom Baldrige National Quality Award, the Nation's premier award for performance excellence and quality achievement given by the National Institute of Standards and Technology within the Department of Commerce. This is the first time in history a recipient has been named in the health care category.

SSM Health Care offers a wide range of medical services centered around the values of compassion, respect, excellence, stewardship, and community. We all benefit from SSM Health Care taking such an active role in our community. By engaging in great technological advances, community projects and charity care, as well as a continuous exploration into medical research, SSM Health Care has demonstrated true leadership and exceptional skill.

With the increasing aging population in Wisconsin, SSM Health Care has been an important provider of quality medical services, including acute care and nursing home facilities to my constituents. I join the National Institute of Standards and Technology as they recognize SSM Health Care with the Malcom Baldrige National Quality Award.

HONORING VETERANS ON VETERANS DAY

HON. HEATHER WILSON

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 15, 2003

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, it is a tremendous honor for me to recognize and pay tribute to the men and women of New Mexico on Veterans Day who have served in the Armed Forces. This solemn occasion, commemorated by the ceremony at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial on November 11, 2003, celebrates the hearts and souls of our veterans who have chosen to make military service an enduring commitment in their lives. This commitment, borne out of a strong sense of duty and patriotism to our principles and to our citizens, has never wavered. Our service men and women have always accepted the hardships imposed on them by their responsibilities, and have been willing to meet any challenge or risk in order to see their missions accomplished. This unwavering loyalty and willingness to serve our country must be commemorated for future generations to remember, and to know that it is because of our veterans that our country continues to remain strong and free.

This Veterans Day also marks the 50th anniversary of the cessation of hostilities of the Korean War. The Korean War was fought under conditions that could only be described as brutal and harsh. Despite the difficulty of their orders, the terrain and the fighting conditions, our men and women in uniform performed with tremendous courage and dignity. Their actions during conflict stand as a testament to the strength of our Armed Forces, and our country's resolve to overcome oppression and tyranny in the world.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in celebrating these exemplary New Mexicans and the examples of heroism and courage they have displayed by their commitment to America.

TRIBUTE TO RON POAST

HON. TAMMY BALDWIN

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 15, 2003

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a person who is a gifted artisan. Mr. Ron Poast is one of our nation's rare makers of the Hardanger fiddles. Mr. Poast's skill in this art has brought him nationwide acclaim.

Ron has recently been awarded the National Heritage Fellowship Award. This very prestigious award was presented to only 16 artists from across the nation.

The Hardanger fiddle is recognized as the national instrument of Norway. Norwegian cultural influences are prevalent in Mr. Poast's hometown of Black Earth, as they are in much of Wisconsin. Ron's passion for the Hardanger was shaped by his Norwegian-American parents and his grandfathers who were both fiddlers. The Hardanger fiddle has a dragonhead scroll, four bowed violin strings, and five sympathetic understrings that produce a unique droning sound. Before shipping each handcrafted fiddle that he makes, Ron carefully "plays it in" to make sure that it has the right distinctive sound. In addition to his rare talent with the Hardanger, he also makes fine banjos, violins, mandolins, and guitars.

Ron has received wide recognition for his excellence in this craft. At the national level, he was recognized by the Smithsonian Folklife Festival. The Wisconsin State Strings Museum Hall of Fame named him Master Luthier of the Year in 1992, and former Governor Tommy Thompson nominated Mr. Poast for the National Living Treasure of the United States Award. When I served in the Wisconsin State Legislature, a photograph of Mr. Poast's great craftsmanship graced the cover of the State of Wisconsin Telephone Directory, a listing of thousands of state employees and their agencies. In 2000, Ron was given the opportunity to display his beautiful instruments internationally at the Chiba People's Days festival in Makuari, Japan.

Mr. Speaker, I join the National Endowment for the Arts in recognizing Mr. Poast's achievements and congratulate him as he accepts the National Heritage Fellowship Award.

QUICK THINKING EIGHT-YEAR-OLD

HON. HEATHER WILSON

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 15, 2003

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, today I bring to your attention the heroic actions of Annalisha Labastida, an 8-year-old girl who called 911 and stayed calm while her dad had a seizure on Interstate 40.

While driving with her dad on Interstate 40, young Annalisha took action when her father had a seizure and blacked out. She maneuvered the truck to a safe stop on the side of the freeway and called 911 for help. She was able to give clear and accurate directions to the emergency operator, which allowed Albuquerque Police to respond quickly to the emergency.

Without Annalisha's quick thinking there could have been a major accident where lives